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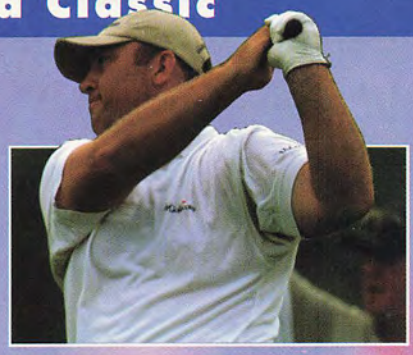

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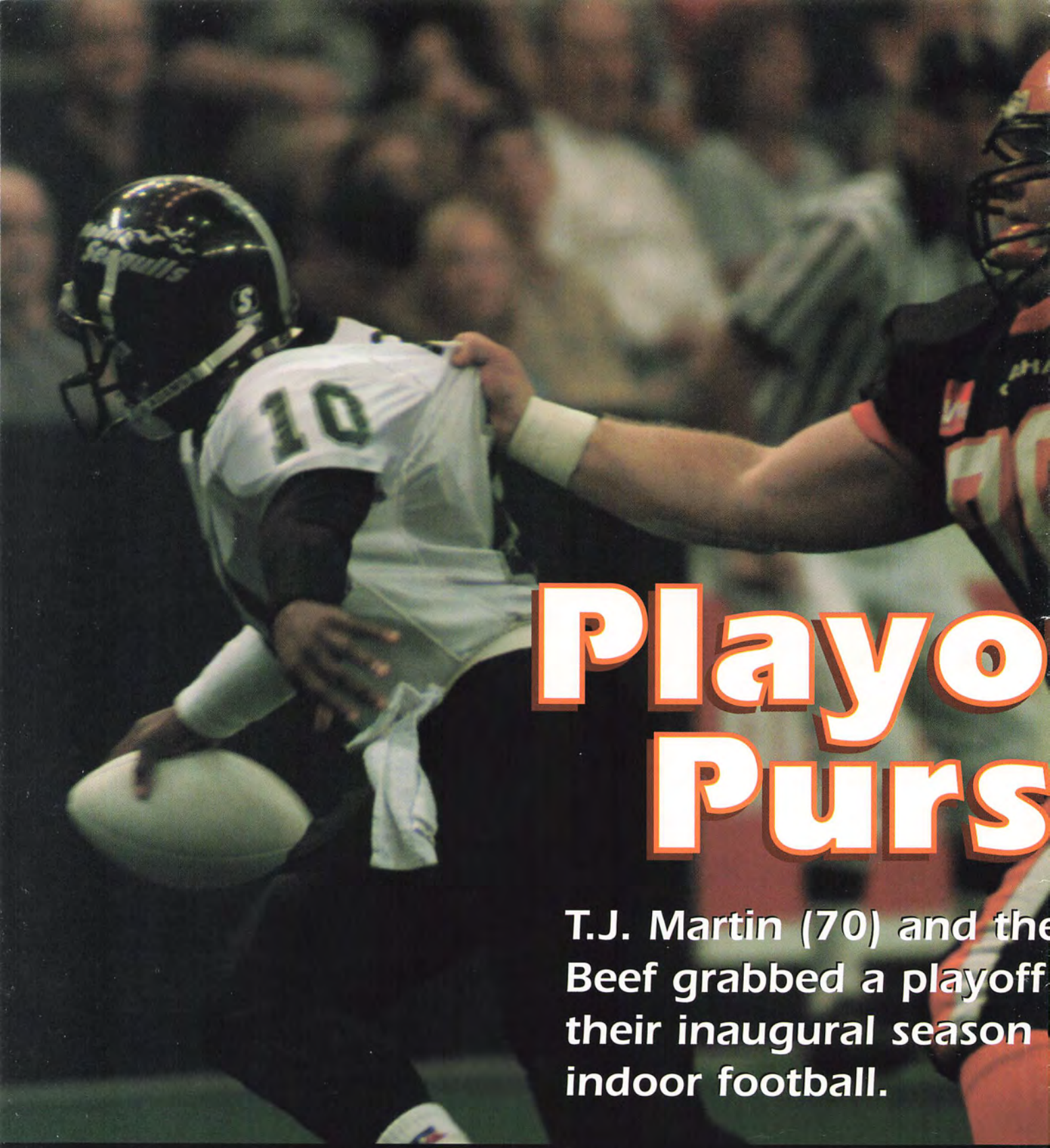

Playo
Purs

T.J. Martin (70) and the
Beef grabbed a playoff
their inaugural season
indoor football.

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PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

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August 2000 • Volume 7 • No. 8

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On the Cover: Nebraska Head Coach Frank Solich was a long-time assistant himself and now heads up one of the most stable staffs in college football history; (inset) Scott Gutschewski was one of several Nebraska golfers in action at the Buy.com Omaha Classic.
Photos by Bob Berry and Eric Francis

your sports magazine

Is there a better time of year than autumn?

Granted, we're still a few weeks away from the true start of fall and the thermometer is offering very little indication that summer has gone away. But on the sports calendar, August signals the start of fall.

This issue of your sports magazine is a football preview of which we are quite proud. In it, we follow up last month's Big XII preview coverage with stories on other divisions of college football along with the high schools.

The University of Nebraska at Omaha will look to seniors Adam Wright and Chris Cooper as the Mavs try to get back to the top of the North Central Conference and into the Division II playoffs. The University of Nebraska-Kearney is thinking conference championship and post-season play as well with sensational quarterback Justin Coleman leading the way. At the NAIA level, there is plenty of excitement in the Concordia camp this fall as the Bulldogs follow up their first winning season in over a decade with an appearance in the Wheat Bowl later this month.

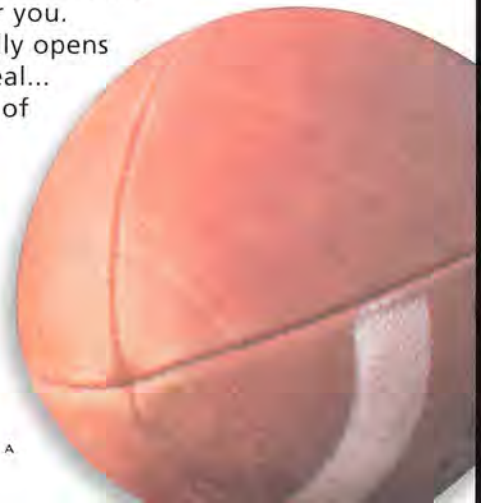
For a look ahead at the prep football season, we enlisted the help of Bob Jensen from the Huskerland Prep Report. Bob's publication is entering its 11th year and it stands out as the all-class authority on high school football in the state. This month, Bob brings us class-by-class previews along with a feature on Lincoln Southeast's dynamic duo of Barrett Ruud and Jeremy Irions.

We certainly haven't forgotten the Huskers! This month's Dodge Different Cover Story is an in-depth look at the foundation of much of Nebraska's football success- it's assistant coaches. No program has enjoyed such solid continuity on its football staff the past three decades and the Huskers have five trophies to validate the notion that keeping good assistants helps win national championships.

Also this month, we welcome a new member to the NSA team in graphic artist Peter Fahner. He will handle most of the layout and design of the magazine and gets to practice his craft on a brand new Macintosh G4 system that is state-of-the-art. We think the changes in our art room will improve our production process dramatically which in turns means a better sports magazine for you.

The 2000 football season officially opens in less than a month. But let's be real... for many of us the greatest season of them all is well underway.

PC



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No Words, Just Deeds

by Kevin Warneke

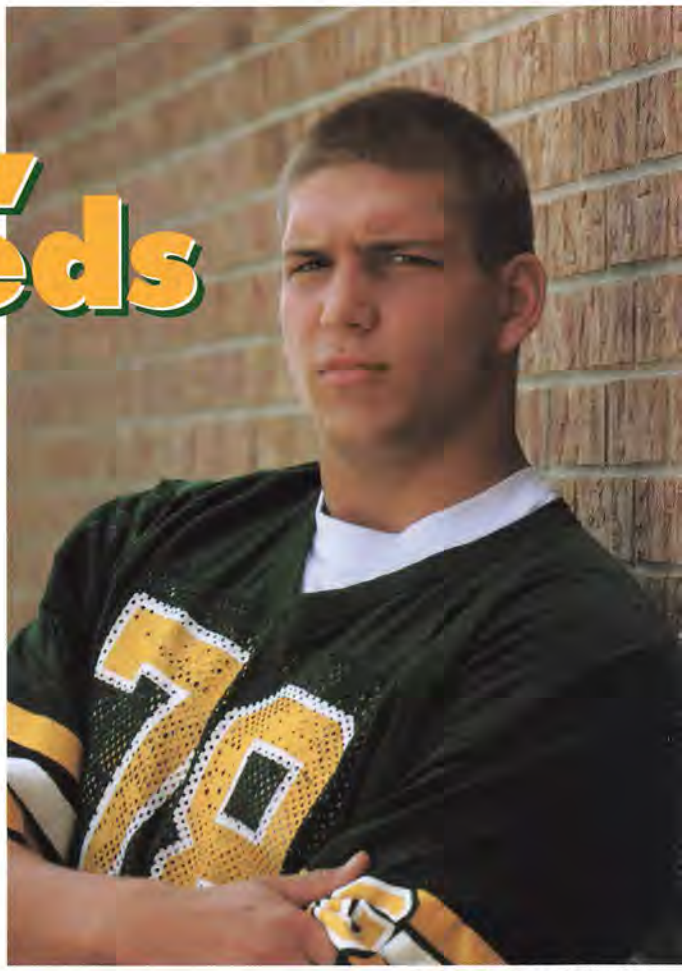

PHOTO BY ERIC FRANCIS

Brandon Avery is a young man of few words and, according to his high school football coach, big blocks and impressive defensive stops.

The Gretna Dragon football team has relied during previous seasons on Avery as an anchor on its offensive line and a stopper on the other side - and will do so again this year, Coach Todd Mueller said.

"He has a motor that won't stop," Mueller said of Avery. "He's very intense and very intelligent. It's a rare combination."

He also has decent speed – 4.9 to 5.0 in the 40 – for a lineman of his size, his coach said.

Last season, Gretna's coaches studied their opponents' offensive tendencies to determine which side of their line they favored. Then, they put Avery on that side. Opposing offenses typically ran away from Avery, Mueller said, which often scrambled their game plan. "I don't blame them."

Mueller recalls the Elkhorn High game last season. Avery was pitted against an all-conference offensive lineman. Avery, using a forearm shiver, literally picked up his opponent, drove him back several steps and pushed him into the Elkhorn quarterback just as he released the ball.

"Our jaws dropped," Mueller recalled. "Then, we just started chuckling. It was that impressive."

On offense, Mueller said, Gretna typically ran Avery's way – right offensive tackle – when the Dragons needed the tough yards. The scheme didn't fool anyone – just challenged the opposition to stop them.

For his effort, Avery received Class B All-State honors from the Omaha World-Herald. Expectations are high for Avery during his senior season.

Avery said he's spent the summer working out in the weight room and on the track. He also attended football camps at Nebraska and Kansas State. Mostly, he needs to gain weight.

"Our jaws dropped," Mueller recalled. "Then, we just started chuckling. It was that impressive."

Avery contracted mononucleosis last year before wrestling season. Not only did the disease rob him of part of his wrestling season, he also lost precious pounds, falling to about 210.
He's up to 235, and figures he needs to be at 265 to be at his best, and to attract the attention of college coaches. His coach said gaining the weight shouldn't be a problem. "He has a wide frame," Mueller said.

Avery still finished fourth at heavyweight last season in Class B. He threw just better than 150 feet in the discus last track season.

Football is his sport, Avery said. He wants to play college football, and has received letters and calls – but no offers yet – from a number of schools.

In addition to all his strengths, Muller said, Avery has another quality college coaches should know about.
No matter what the opposition sends his way verbally, Avery refuses to budge. "He never really says anything – then he runs them over. I like that." nsa

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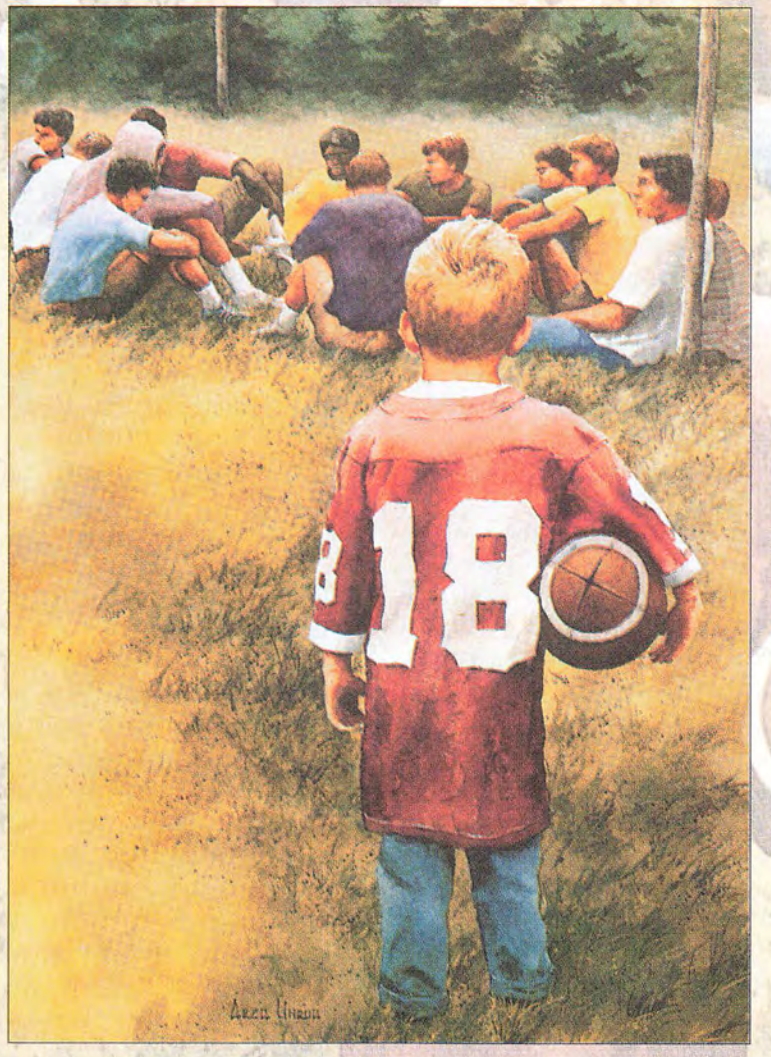

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Between the lines

BY JOHN KNICELY

Better With Age

Last month, I had the privilege of working alongside the Nebraska PGA in staging a benefit golf tournament for 9-year old Andrew Evans of Omaha.

He tragically became a quadriplegic through injuries suffered in a car accident four years ago and the proceeds of the tournament went to Andrew, who soon will be entering the fourth grade.

This particular tournament also provided a hands-on history lesson for those who participated. All the players who teed it up that day at Ironwood Golf Course wore knickers and used hickory shaft clubs made in the early 1900s.

It was a unique experience for everybody who played with the exception of

Omahan Randy Jensen who just happens to be the current World Champion of hickory shaft golf. In fact, he's a three-time world champ.

I had peripheral knowledge of Jensen's exploits over the years, but now after chunking and clunking my way around 18 holes using hickory shafts my appreciation for his accomplishments has grown considerably. The champ's skills are remarkable.

While most golfers would love to average 250 yards off the tee with modern day clubs, Jensen consistently booms his old-fashioned driver 270 and beyond. Not only is he a scratch handicapper using the vintage clubs, his stroke average is actually under par.

Earlier this year, during a friendly money match from the back tees at Benson, Jensen threw a nice little 67 at his buddies.

His passion for nostalgic play dates back to 1987 when Jensen opened a used club and repair shop near 45th and Dodge streets called Classic Golf. He had a number of collectible clubs and several years later decided on a whim to enter a regional hickory shaft tournament. Jensen remembers that, "I could hit them straight but I had no clue how far a mashie (seven iron in modern terms) would fly."

That experience sent Jensen straight to the practice tee where he dialed in to win the same tournament not only the next year, but every year since with the exception of a playoff loss in 1994.

This month, Jensen is vying for his second national hickory shaft championship at the Oakhurst Links in West Virginia, where the conditions are so authentic, sheep actually graze in the fairways.

In May, he traveled overseas with the U.S. team and personally beat Europe's No. 1 player in a newly created hickory shaft version of the Ryder Cup.

Jensen estimates that he now golfs about 85 percent of the time with hickory shaft clubs. His expertise carries over to the shop where he easily separates worthless shaft from treasure. He can identify young hickory hacked with a saw and 300-year-old hickory axed with precision along the grain. Collectors pay big dollars for the latter.

Mention your preference for speedy greens and Jensen will take you back to the 1890s and explain how the advent of the lawn mower not only altered golf course design but also revamped club face weighting.

In fact it was during that period that Jensen says a "creative burst" in golf club design brought changes many of us think are unique to our day and age, but are instead simply improvements on old ideas such as perimeter weighting and metal heads. Perhaps you didn't know that Johnny Farrell won the 1928 U.S. Open using a metal head driver.

Jensen said the hardest vintage club to find these days for playing purposes is a putter that actually rolls the ball smoothly along the green. He's measured enough

Jensen dresses the part of a hickory shaft champion.

of the so called "flat sticks" to known most are simply not flat. It's quite difficult to find the cup with a wavy putter face that tends to jumpstart the ball in a wayward direction.

That design flaw gives those of us who struggled on the greens in the Andrew Evans Classic a wonderful excuse. Of course we're not fooling anyone because our inadequacies with modern day equipment remain.

If you're interested in following the developments, Jensen suggests logging onto Oldgolfchat.com. And if you do, you'll read more about the World Champ from Omaha.

The 45-year-old defends his title in October, and he's a good bet to win again. Much like his vintage clubs, Jensen seems to improve with age. nsa

John Knicely is news co-anchor at WOWT-TV (Channel 6) in Omaha.

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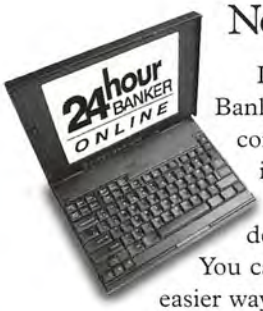

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the Rose Parade

FROM JIM ROSE

Something STRANGE is Going On

We have an outbreak! We have an epidemic! Something is sweeping the world of college sports. Like wintertime flu, it appears to discriminate against no one. This virus will infect the young, the old – from all regions and leagues. Gasp! There it is!

Integrity! Honor! Loyalty!

From where did it come and is there any stopping it? Maybe our best hope to get back to normalcy is to contain it. Maybe we can't stop it, but we do hope to contain it. You can thank Roy Williams for this. The Huckleberry Hound Tar Heel look-alike shoved his dream aside for something that never gets preference.

You've heard of it? It's called the right thing. North Carolina turned Williams' dream into a seven-day nightmare for Kansas. They went hard for the guy to coach their basketball team. All KU could do to keep him was keep reminding him of how much they loved him and how much he loved them.

Nevertheless, for an entire week, he kept balkanizing his heart into little sections of KU and Carolina blue. Then, we all cheered when his guys were tougher to say good-bye to than his mentor, Dean Smith. And along with those two simple words "I'm staying," Williams started what I hope is an avalanche of integrity. Hey, something's in the air. Eddie Fogler, Plan B for North Carolina, said the same thing and won't leave South Carolina. Dana Altman pulled out of the Miami sweepstakes when it was clear he was the choice of the athletic director.

What gives?

Coaches see a change in atmosphere. Time was you began your career in the boondocks hoping a little luck, talent, elbow grease and a timely upset got you that dreamboat job.

Creighton, for example, was an excellent place to work that premise. Time is that so much gold sits in that pot, that colleges are building dreamboat jobs every day.

Miami? Ha. This was college football's stale joke. The line went like this: Bikinis, silicone breasts, hot weather and no chaperones await you football studs just for signing the line. Upon completion of this form, your requisite military fatigues for the Fiesta Bowl trip may be procured in the Football Office, which doubles as a clothing-optional study hall.

Hey, Miami is now a basketball school. They're building an on-campus arena and feature enough talent to make a serious run at the Sweet 16 next season. So, why wouldn't Altman pack his SPF 30 and hit the beach?

Because Athletic Director Bruce Rasmussen and CU have made Creighton a pretty OK place to do the job. Money to recruit, travel, nice digs and a check that just might eclipse the night shift opening at Stoysich Sausage.

Plus, Dana is the guy at Creighton. He goes to Miami, they throw a party, line up a golf tournament and then let him go about earning his new, big bucks. They'll start loving him after the investment is returned. In Omaha, they already do and will.

Most coaches also feel the same heat that Joe Suit does. Got a wife? Give her a vote. Got kids? What would they prefer? If where you're sitting is willing to pony up and add a feather or two – take it. Recruiting gets a lot easier if your promises come in the form of sworn depositions. Up-and-comers among coaches face a make-or-break question in the living room.

"Yeah, coach, I like you. My kid here likes you. We think we can handle February in Omaha just fine for them big games; and shoot – them five other kids you got lined up to make sure Junior here gets out of bed by 11 and makes it to Theory of Lunch class has made the Mrs. real happy. But the guy in the red sweater just here sez you gonna be gone in a year."

"Um, er. Well, Pops, I expect to be here. Then again, if I got hit by a bus tomorrow, nobody could predict that." (For the record, nobody has ever actually been hit by a bus.)

By staying put, suddenly, the sales pitch to school boy phenoms is a lot more believable. And, you've got something on them when the should-I-stay-or-should-I-go season rolls around. Before this integrity outbreak, quietly the kid wonders if his coach is committed to him? He thinks, these NBA dudes are flickin serious jack my way and chasing it with stuff like, 'Hey kid, forget about that school and that coach. He's in it for him. You watch, first good job comes around, the loser radio talk guy knows about your coach taking it before you."

Sadly, he's right. So, lets line everybody up and inject them with whatever Roy and Eddie and Dana caught, build up a supply of selflessness and get back to making fun of Miami football. nsa

Jim Rose is program director at KLIN Radio in Lincoln and host of the "Sports Nightly" call-in show on the Pinnacle Sports Network.

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Familiar Faces

by Terry L. Henion

Nelson Barnes
Defensive ends coach
3 years

Craig Bohl
Defensive coordinator
5 years

Frank Solich
Head coach -22 years

In the nomadic world of collegiate football coaches, putting down permanent roots is about as common as the passing of Haley's Comet.

There is always a "better" job somewhere, the pursuit of "rebuilding a program" to ponder and the goal of being the head coach is the career "carrot" for many.

But at the University of Nebraska, things are different. Coaches seem to find bedrock on the Husker staff and many plant their flags in concrete at Memorial Stadium. And that longevity of the Husker staff is a big factor in why Nebraska annually challenges for the national football championship.

Gary Barnett, the head coach at Colorado, is going into his second season as the Buffs head man. Barnett knows a thing or two about building a coaching staff, taking a hapless Northwestern program to two consecutive Big Ten titles and a Rose Bowl appearance before returning to Boulder where he previously had served as an assistant coach to Bill McCartney.

"The biggest advantage, I think, for a school like Nebraska or a Penn State or Florida State is in the day-to-day operation," Barnett said. "Everyone there has bought into the system. They know how each other think. They are all on the same page. That sure has made life easier for Tom (Osborne) and now Frank (Solich).

"That is perhaps the most difficult thing you have to do as a head coach — is build a staff and then try to keep it intact."

To put it in perspective, Nebraska's 10-man coaching staff, on average, has been with the Huskers for 12.4 years. A quick glance at other Big 12 schools shows the disparity. Colorado: 2.9 years. Kansas State: 4.1 years. Texas A&M: 3.1. Texas: 2.0 years.

Nebraska's coaching staff has a total of 124 years with the Huskers. And that sort of longevity pays off in many ways, Barnett said.

"Take recruiting, for example. If Milt Tenopir (NU's offensive line coach) tells a kid that he will be there all four or five years that the kid is playing, he can back it up," Barnett said. "Milt has been there forever and that is where he will stay. The kid sees that and it weighs in his decision, let me tell you.

"Football is a game of repetition

Dodge Different.

Ron Brown
Receivers coach – 13 years

and sometimes I think we all make it more difficult than it really is. So when you have a coaching staff that has been intact for a very long time, kids see that and they like it. They know the guy who recruited them will be there to coach them, too."

Solich, entering his third season as the Husker head coach, has been on the Nebraska coaching staff for 22 seasons. He played for Bob Devaney, was Osborne's backfield coach and was a logical successor when Osborne retired three years ago. Along the way, Solich interviewed for several head coaching positions, including the head spot at Minnesota. But he opted to stay at Nebraska.

Now, as the head Husker, Solich appreciates even more the dedication and loyalty that his staff has displayed over the years.

"The longevity of the Husker coaching staff is recognized as being one of the reasons why Nebraska football has been able to establish a rich and consistent tradition of winning football games," Solich said. "The fact that our coaches have remained together for so many years has been vital to the success of the program.

George Darlington
Defensive backfield coach
27 years

"Longevity of staff touches all levels of the program, from recruiting to developing relationships with players to knowing each other's coaching strengths. We have been together so long that we don't tend to jump at changes and new trends blindly. We are on the same page in all areas of our program."

Defensive backfield coach George Darlington is the dean of the Husker coaches, now heading into his 27th season at Nebraska. Darlington said the longevity of the coaching staff is often spoken about among the coaches.

"Yeah, we occasionally talk about it and what a plus it is for us," Darlington said. "The players understand that their position coach, the guy they work with every day, will be here every year. They don't have to worry about re-learning a technique or figuring out a new guy's personality.

"The less a player has to worry about in day-to-day things, the better that player is going to be, I think. And

Turner Gill
Quarterbacks coach – 8 years

here, they know that the guy who coached their position last year will be the guy who coaches their position this year, too."

And what exactly is it that keeps Nebraska's coaching staff firmly ensconced in Lincoln? Oh, there are occasional departures. Tony Samuel left to take the head position at New Mexico State, for example. But for the most part, assistant coaches tend to stick around in Lincoln.

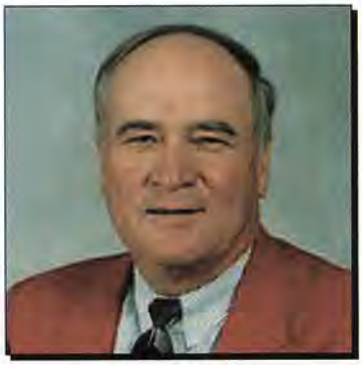
"There are a couple of reasons that our coaches stay so long," said Tenopir, one of the most respected offensive line coaches in the business.

"Normally, any head coaching job that opens up is a program in trouble. Either the money isn't there to support

YOUR LOCAL DODGE DEALERS PRESENT
cover story Huskers
Dodge Different.

Dave Gillespie
Offensive Backfield coach
2 years

Milt Tenopir
Offensive line coach
26 years



Dan Young
Offensive line and special teams coach – 17 years

"This is a great place to coach football, a great place to live and work, a great place to raise a family. Looking back, I couldn't name a better place to be a college football coach than right here in Lincoln."
George Darlington

the program or there are all sort of internal problems going on.

"Really, this is an ideal situation for a coach here at Nebraska. The fans are tremendous, the administration backs us all the way and we are competing for the national championship nearly ever year. There are not very many places that you could have that, even as a head coach. You would be hard-pressed to name any other place where a football coach has it better than we do here at Nebraska."

Darlington echoed Tenopir's thoughts about the attractiveness at staying as a Nebraska assistant opposed to seeking the head coaching position somewhere else.

"When I was at an age where I could have been a viable head coach candidate somewhere, I just felt that working for Tom Osborne, the way he treated his assistants, could not have been better anywhere," Darlington said. "This is a great place to coach football, a great place to live and work, a great place to raise a family. Looking back, I couldn't name a better place to be a college football coach than right here in Lincoln."

Some fans might argue that a coaching staff with that sort of longevity is vulnerable to predictability. Yet, over the years, Nebraska's coaches have shown an uncanny ability to stay ahead of the trends. Several years ago, the Husker staff decided to junk its standard "read and react" basic five-man defensive front in favor of the ultra-aggressive 4-3 alignment, one based on attack and speed. It was a major change in coaching philosophy, and the Huskers have flourished under the new scheme.

To ensure that the Husker coaches do not get into a play-calling rut, Solich said his staff, as with most, continually charts its play selection and scouts itself just as thoroughly as it would prepare for an upcoming rival.

"One of the big reasons we do so is because your opponent is charting every move you make," Solich said. "If the opponent becomes aware of your tendencies, it can make a big difference in the game. If you become too predictable, and are doing the same things in similar situations, then the other team can and will take advantage of those tendencies."

Uh, Frank, and what about that predictable "toss sweep" that the Huskers seemingly use to open every game?

The bottom line is this: knowing what Nebraska play is coming doesn't necessarily mean that an opponent can stop it.

Tenopir said the coaching staff has equal input into any long-range changes in football tactics or operations, and that "one for all and all for one" attitude, too, is part of the reason that so many assistants choose to remain with the Huskers.

"To be quite honest, the working conditions here at Nebraska are wonderful for a football coach," Tenopir said. "The people in charge let the coaches coach. It is nothing like a dictatorial operation. We all get a say in things. Individual input helps make up the whole and that is what occurs here."

In the long run (probably after a toss sweep), Husker coaches like their situation in Lincoln. They are paid well, treated like kings by fans (unless the Huskers lose, of course) and annually are in a position to compete for national championships.

"After being at Nebraska for so long, you develop a strong loyalty to the program," Solich said. "The school, the players and the coaches all work together to keep alive the winning tradition. It is important to them." nsa

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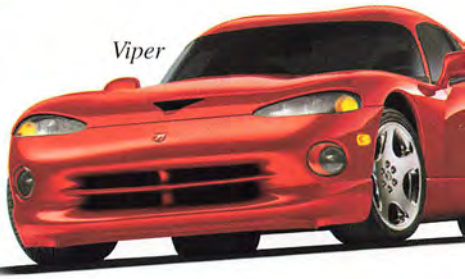

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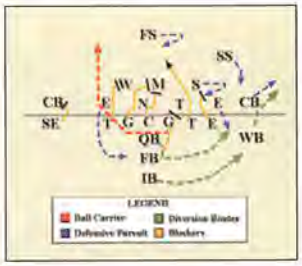
The Bummeroosky. The Hitch N' Ladder. The Bounceroosky. The kickoff return through the band. The flea-kicker.

There are a few plays that make up so much of college football lore that you always remember when and where you saw them first.

Few, though, ever acquire bandit status. How often do you see a trick play receive serious attention from the stuffed shirts of major sports league front offices? One play drew such attention, though, that the NCAA saw fit to eliminate it all together in the early '90s. Of course we're talking about the ***fumbleroosky****.*



But first things first. What is Chalk Talk? Its an opportunity for football fans to get inside the plays, to see how the X's and O's fit together, and to understand the strategy and planning that make football the world's most brutal chess match.

In this issue, we'll break down Nebraska's famous fumbleroosky play. Made famous by Coach Tom Osborne against the likes of Oklahoma and Colorado, perhaps the most famous fumbleroosky of all time was Dean Steinkuhler's 20-yard jaunt in the second quarter of the 1984 Orange Bowl against the Miami Hurricanes.

The run put the Huskers on the board for the first time and lit a fire under the Scoring Explosion that nearly led to an amazing comeback and a national championship.

Though Miami went on to produce a dynasty throughout the rest of 1980s, for at least a moment an intentional fumble to an Outland and Lombardi Award-winning guard, who went rumbling, bumbling, and stumbling into the end zone, made the mighty 'Canes just look downright silly.

PLAY SETUP

There's a lot more to the ***fumbleroosky*** than just putting the ball on the turf and having your guard pick it up. A whole string of events must be planned out and set in motion in order to avoid a major blunder.

The defense needs to be scouted. An aggressive, attacking defense is more likely to overpursue on the play fake, leaving the G with room to run. A stay-at-home, read-and-react defense is likely to shut the fumbleroosky right down, so the opponent's defensive philosophy must be taken into consideration.

Offensive personnel need to be assessed. You aren't likely to find a budding I-back on your line, but your guard should have some mobility and an ability to hold onto the ball.

Outland trophy winner and All-Pro guard Will Shields is a perfect example — he was one of the last players to ever run the play — it was banned after he tore off a long run in 1992's 52-7 pasting of Colorado.

In the game, setting up the play is important as well. An offense that runs out of multiple formations, with frequently pulling guards and plenty of sweeps and options, will be most successful at catching an opponent off guard.

If the defense is used to seeing guards pulling, and backs going every which way, they are less likely to catch on to the trick right away. Again, creating an urge to attack and to overpursue on the part of the defense is helpful. This can be accomplished by establishing a successful running attack, by exploiting an emotional advantage, or by running similar plays multiple times to lure the defense into expecting more of the same.

Once the time is ripe, there are few plays in football that can rival the fumbleroosky either in risk (you're intentionally leaving the ball on the turf for anyone to grab) or in pure chutzpah (you're sending your offensive guard downfield carrying the ball).

RUNNING THE PLAY

First and foremost, the QB needs to be able to quickly, and softly, place the football on the ground in a location where it will not be kicked around or picked up by the defense.

Second, the G must be in control of his body (not something very easy for a tired 300-pounder to do) so that he not only can pick the ball up, but hold on to it and move forward as well.

The G also must possess at least a touch of elusiveness as he will be expected to turn upfield in a hurry, avoiding the unblocked DE.

As a diagram of the play demonstrates, the play-side DE is allowed to penetrate unencumbered in the hopes that he will follow the diversionary option run in the opposite direction.

Careful film study of an opponent's DE is necessary before deciding to run this play. The fumbleroosky isn't likely to work well against a DE who stays at home to contain, but can surprise an aggressive or overpursuing rusher.

Third, there can be no penetration allowed on the play side (left side in diagram). The whole intention is to get the G through the line of scrimmage untouched. If he's held up in the backfield, the play will be over in a hurry, unless you've got Barry Sanders out of position playing on the line somewhere.

Finally, the backfield's fake will determine how far the lineman can go in the secondary. If the fake isn't convincing, the LBs and DBs won't bite, and few of them will have trouble catching a 300-pounder chugging by them. In the diagram, we show the backfield faking what would be a trap option to the non-play side, hoping to bring along as many defenders as possible.

DEFENDING THE PLAY

Let's be honest — coaches never were spending a lot of time trying to figure out 'how to defend the fumbleroosky'.

It wasn't something you really looked for, nor did you see it very often. But the best way to avoid getting burned by the fumbleroosky is the best way to avoid getting burned by any type of counter or misdirection: STAY AT HOME!

Defensive ends need to be trained to hold their ground against counters, reverses or cutbacks. Penetrate, scrape down the line if necessary, but stay at home.

Likewise for LBs and DBs. When defending a running play, one of the worst things a linebacker can do is overpursue. Chasing too far and too hard leaves cutback lanes wide open for quick backs or handoff recipients.

Last, but certainly not least, is a basic tenet too often overlooked: defensive linemen need to watch the ball! D-Linemen are trained to watch the ball (rather than listening to the QB's cadence) for the snap, and are trained to watch where the ball goes to spot fake handoffs, play-action passes, and other tricks. Watching the ball the whole time offers enterprising noseguards the ultimate way to stop the fumbleroosky — pick it up and run the other way!

In short, the fumbleroosky is really far from some "lucky trick play" to pull out once in a blue moon. It involves a great deal of planning, teamwork and timing to run successfully, and with the proper foresight and precision, would be a valuable tool for any daring offensive coordinator.

And as a crowd-pleaser and highlight film-filler, the fumbleroosky can't be beat. Hopefully in time, the NCAA will come to appreciate the play as well and initiate its long-awaited reinstatement into the pantheon of great college football plays.

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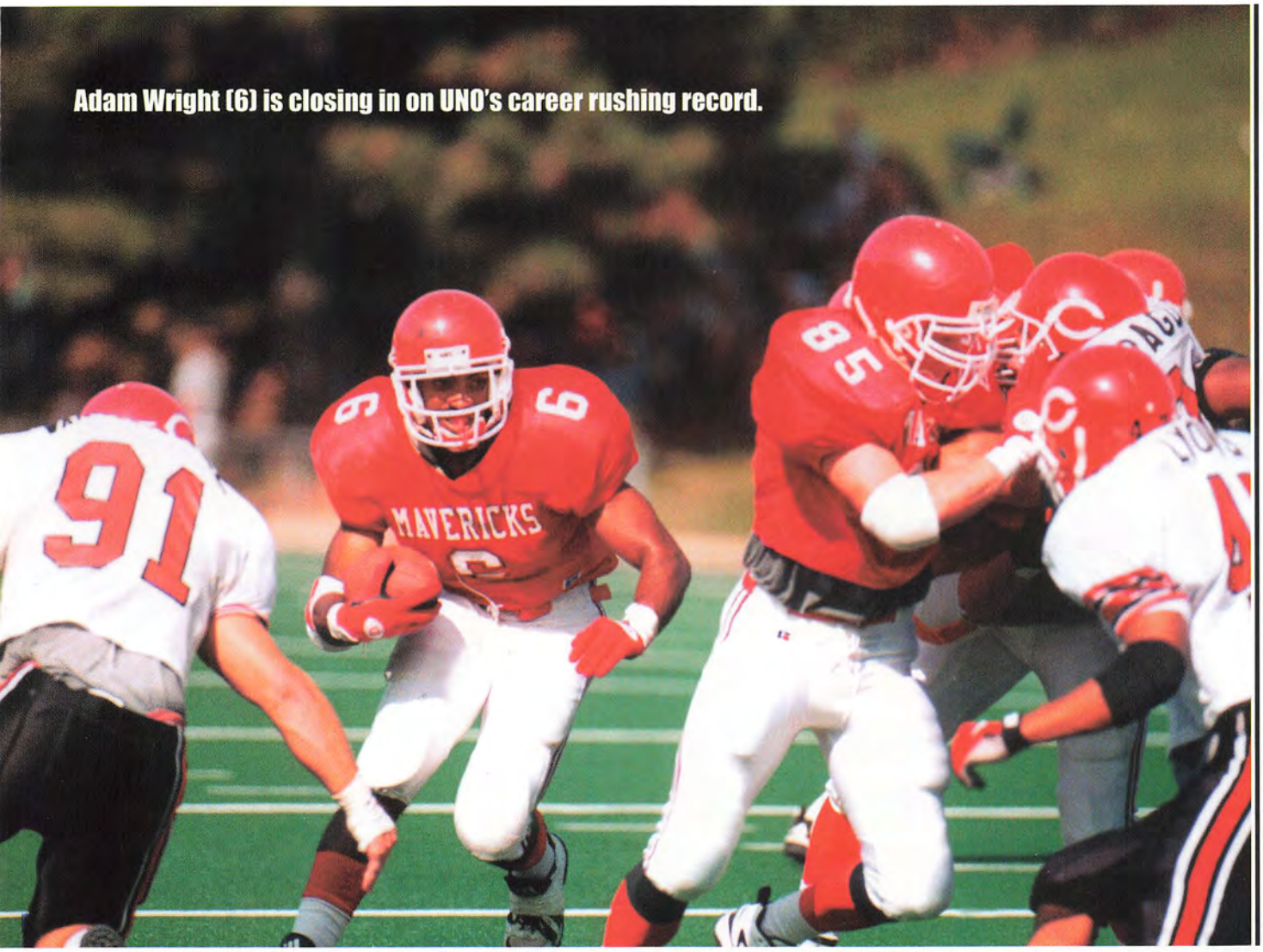
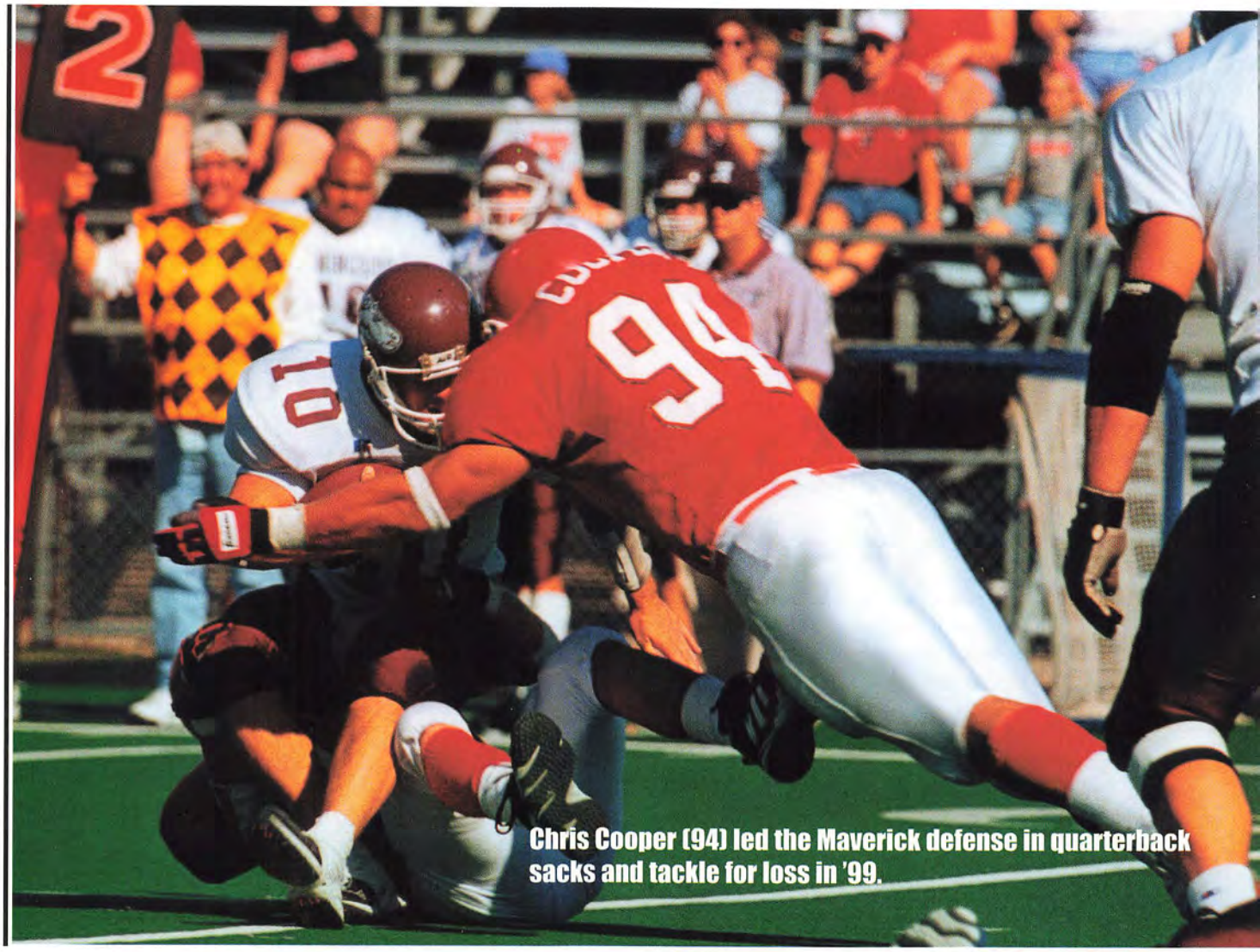


PHOTO UNO SPORTS INFORMATION

UNO FOOTBALL



Chris Cooper (94) led the Maverick defense in quarterback sacks and tackle for loss in '99.

PHOTO UNO SPORTS INFORMATION

TWO FOR THE SHOW

A college football coach pins extra responsibility on seniors. When in comes to seniors bearing the burden of leadership, it has been that way since leather helmets and truly pig-skinned footballs.

The leadership load is especially heavy on those seniors

> *"We have a summer conditioning program that we can't make anybody come to...neither of these guys have missed one time. Over the course of the summer Adam and Coop have both dedicated themselves to working out and being a model for our younger players."*
>
> – UNO HEAD COACH, PAT BEHRNS

that lead the way for a youthful team with high expectations. Such is the case for the 2000 edition of the UNO Mavericks, who refuse to let a short supply of seniors be an excuse or a reason for a less-than-sensational season this fall.

Adam Wright and Chris Cooper are set to be the leaders of the Mavs this fall and both are more the "lead by example" type. Wright is closing in on the University of Nebraska-Omaha's career rushing record and Cooper will anchor a UNO defense that needs to be improved if the Mavs plan to better their 7-4 record from a season ago.

For Wright, the pressure to turn in his second straight 1,000-yard rushing season is intensified with the departure of quarterback Kwanzi Watts. No doubt, Wright is the main weapon for UNO this season.

"I am ready and we are ready as an offense to come together and be on the same page with the same goals," said Wright. "That was not always the case last year, not at all, and I think that focus on shared goals will make us a better offense this season."

Wright will be running behind an offensive line short on experience but big on size. Even without a senior up front and with Watts' 1,100+ yards gone from the attack, he expects the Mavs' running game to rival last season, when UNO averaged over 335 yards per game.

"I always encourage the offensive line no matter what happens on a certain play because you need those guys to be playing with confidence," said Wright. "I have a lot of confidence in them and even if I get dropped in the backfield, I tell 'em not to worry about it and try to get them up for the next play. I have a lot of confidence that this O-line is going to come together this fall and be as good as the one last year."

On the other side of the ball, Cooper is going to be the marquee player expected to blow up the opposing team's offensive plays. He did a great job of that in 1999, recording nine quarterback sacks and 17 tackles for losses to lead UNO in both big-play defensive categories. As good as he was at trapping opposing players behind the line last season, Cooper warns the opposition that he expects to be better this autumn.

"I have worked a lot on footwork and speed this year to be better on the pass rush and getting upfield," Cooper said. "I always line up on the tight end side so I am supposed to be the one that gets to the quarterback when we have the rush on. As a senior, I think I have seen about every play there is in college football and I really think I will get a better jump a lot of times this season."

Both Wright and Cooper know that Head Coach Pat Behrns expects them to perform on the field on Saturdays and to be a team leader 24 and 7 for the next four months.

"I feel like the torch of leadership has been passed on to me," explained Wright. "I have been here since '96 and the leadership role just dropped right in front of me after last season. It took awhile to develop the understanding of what it means to be the guy that the younger players look up to. I mostly lead by example because I am not very vocal by nature, but I do get on a guy every once in awhile."

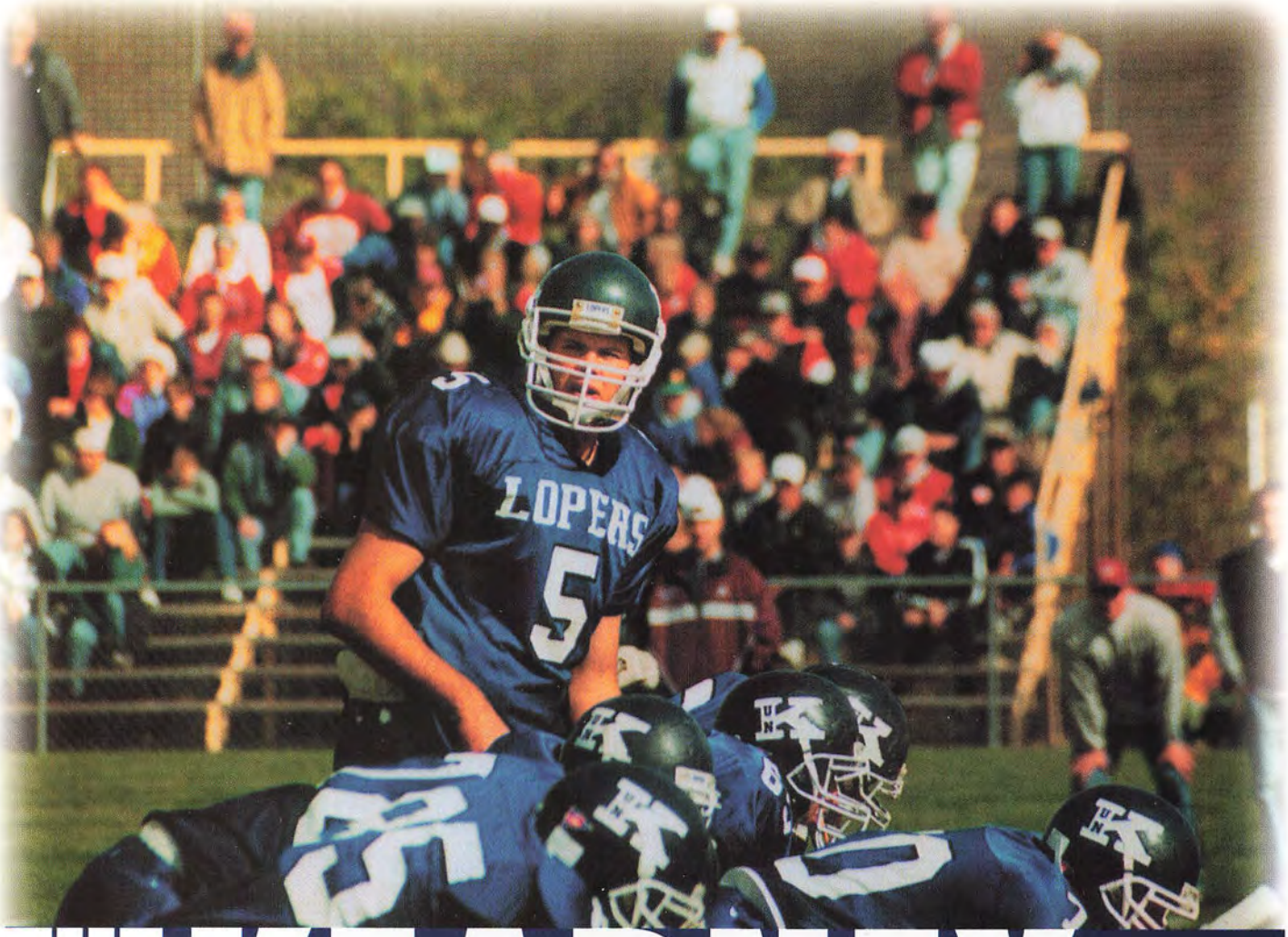
Cooper echoes much of Wright's take on the new leadership role they find themselves in.

"There's no doubt I am in the role of a team leader as a captain this season," Cooper said. "I will give a pep talk sometimes but I really am better at leading by example, too. Younger players will look at the experienced guys who have been successful and hopefully pattern themselves after you. That is our responsibility to them to do things the right way."

Behrns couldn't be happier with the duo of Wright and Cooper and how they have grown into quality seniors on his club.

"Both of these guys are excellent leaders for us and have really accepted the challenge we put before them last year," Behrns said. "We have a summer conditioning program that we can't make anybody come to...neither of these guys have missed one time. Over the course of the summer Adam and Coop have both dedicated themselves to working out and being a model for our younger players."

The season starts with a bang for UNO again this season. The Mavs open at Northwest Missouri State, the two-time defending NCAA Division II national champion. UNO handed Northwest its only loss a year ago, pounding the Bearcats 40-17 in Omaha in early September. After opening at NWMSU, the Mavs return home to host Nebraska-Kearney, which is picked to win the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (RMAC).

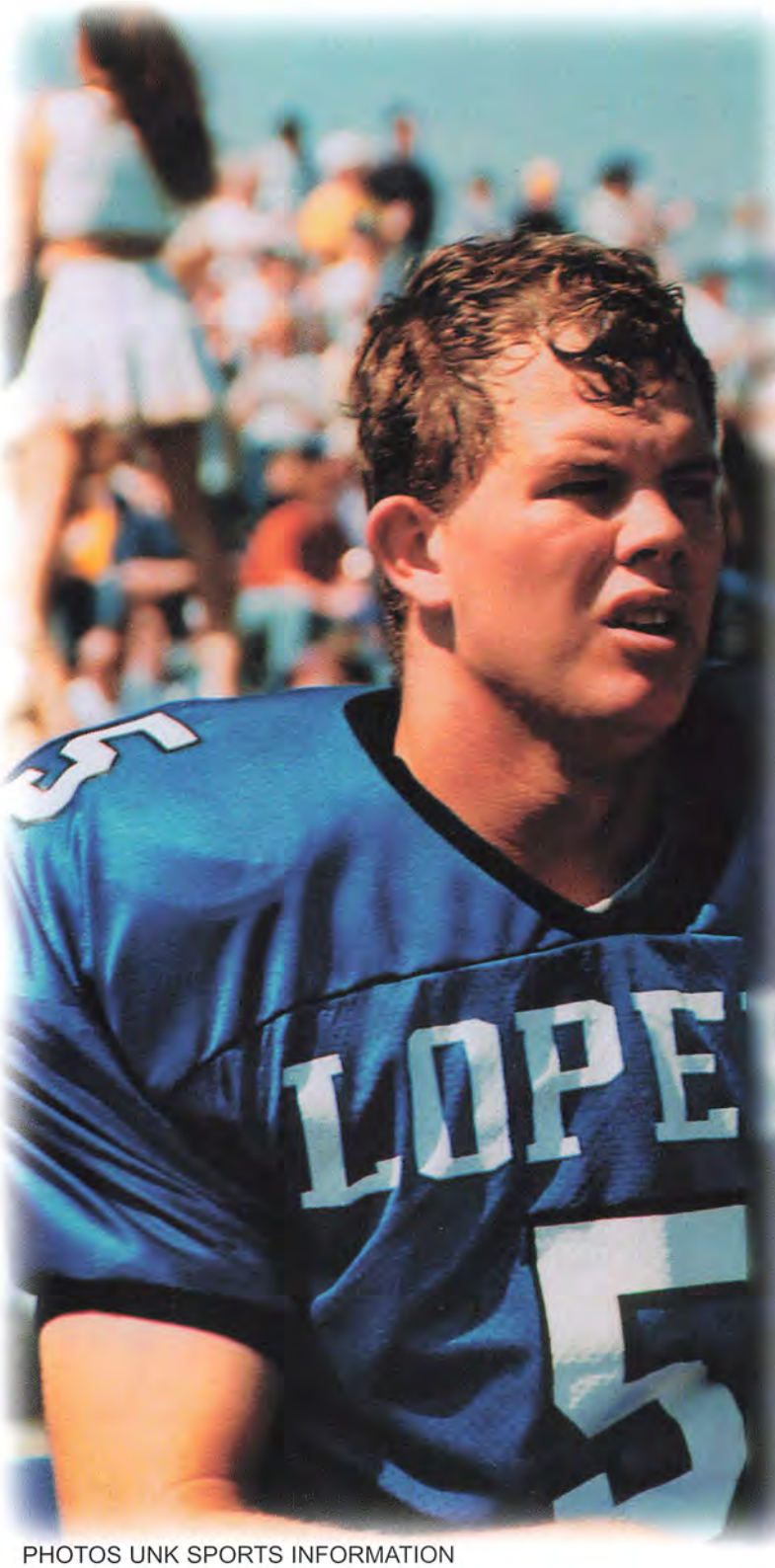


THE KEARNEY KANNON

by Paul Clark

He is, without question, one of the best NCAA Division II quarterbacks in history. It is certainly not a stretch to say he is the best DII signal-caller in the country this fall. No matter how you label Justin Coleman, he is the key to University of Nebraska-Kearney football fortunes in 2000.

Coleman and his Loper teammates are favored to win the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference (RMAC) championship this fall. Whether or not UNK can elevate its play to challenge regional powers



PHOTOS UNK SPORTS INFORMATION

like Northwest Missouri State, Northern Colorado and UNO remains to be seen. But if it happens, you can be sure Coleman, the "Kearney Kannon," will be the reason.

At 6'5" and 225 pounds, the fifth-year senior walks and talks and looks and feels like a quarterback with pro potential. Coleman is a finalist and many people's favorite for the Harlan Hill Award- Division II's equivalent to the Heisman. He finished sixth in the voting last year after claiming RMAC Player-of-the-Year honors.

What's more, Coleman is on pace to become the all-time leading passer in Division II history. The McCook High School graduate currently ranks 15th in career passing yards in DII and needs just over 2,300 yards this autumn to move into the #1 spot (currently held by Chris Hatcher of Valdosta State GA). If he performs true to his career average of some 285 passing yards per game, Coleman will wreck the existing standard by some 550 yards.

New Kearney Head Coach Darrell Morris inherits a great one at QB in his first season as the successor to long-time coach Claire Boroff. Coleman's position coach, UNK Offensive Coordinator Nate Kaczor, sums up his quarterback's attributes without much hyperbole.

"Justin is one of the most unselfish, hungry team players that I've been around. He continues to strive for improvement on a daily basis. It should be no surprise that he has become an exceptional college quarterback," Kaczor said. Well put.

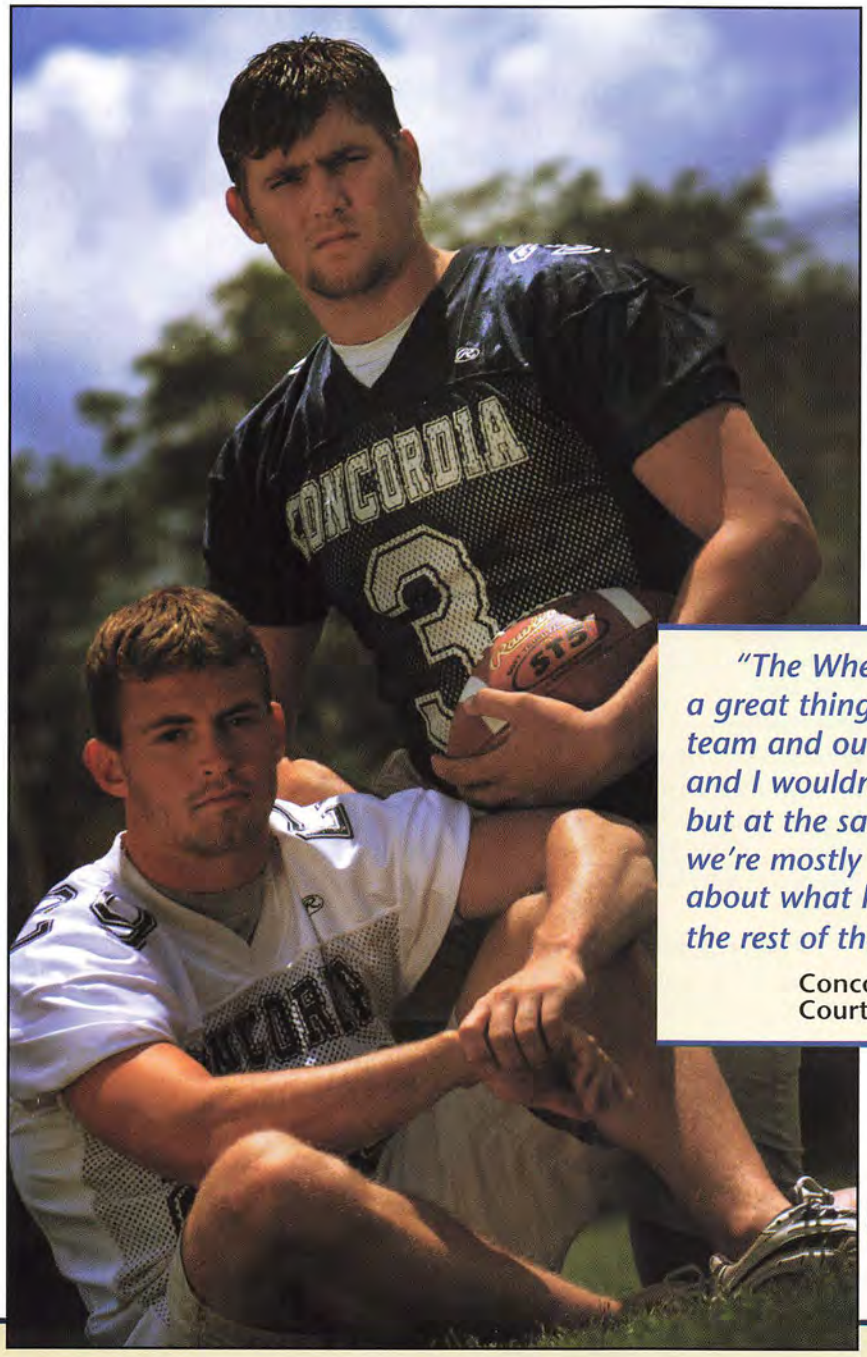
UNK has put together a fact sheet on Coleman that looks like the resume of a corporate whiz kid. Highlights include his 30 straight starts as UNK's quarterback, which covers three seasons and goes back to the first game of his first year as a redshirt freshman in 1997. He has throw a touchdown pass in 28 of those 30 games, including his last 14 straight, with a total of 73 scoring strikes.

He has only been intercepted 31 times in his career, about once a game on average, with just seven of those picks coming during his junior year. During one stretch of the 1999 season, Coleman released 174 straight passes without giving up an interception. And as an "oh, by the way" footnote, Coleman is UNK's #1 punter and averaged almost 40 yards per boot last season.

Keep an eye on Justin Coleman and UNK this fall. It promises to be a season to remember for the Lopers and their senior quarterback.

Harvesting Wins

Concordia opens 2000 in the Wheat Bowl



by Paul Clark

Coming off its best season in 12 years, it is easy to understand why Concordia was happy to start its football season a week early this fall.

The Bulldogs are eager to kick off the 2000 campaign after going 5-4 last season for the program's first winning campaign since 1987. The new season will start early for Concordia University with an Aug. 26 clash against Lindenwood University in the Wheat Bowl.

The game in Ellinwood, Kan., starts the NAIA football season nationwide and Concordia's appearance this fall is the first by a Nebraska school. Lindenwood is coached by former Kansas City Chiefs player and Hastings College Coach Dan Kratzer.

> *"The Wheat Bowl is a great thing for our team and our school and I wouldn't trade it, but at the same time we're mostly concerned about what happens the rest of the season"*
>
> **Concordia Coach, Courtney Meyer**

Concordia Coach Courtney Meyer was recognized at the Nebraska-Iowa Athletic Conference (NIAC) Coach-of-the-Year after last season. The Bulldog coach is confident his team will be up to challenge

Ross Wurdeman (3) and Troy Schlueter are two key players in Concordia's bid to challenge for the first Great Plains Athletic Conference football championship.

Photo by Eric Francis

of posting another winning record this year.

"We've certainly got high expectations coming into the season and the Wheat Bowl game has really provided extra motivation for our players," Meyer said. "We saw that in spring drills especially. It was just after the announcement that we had accepted the invitation to play in the game and our kids responded. There is a lot of community interest...we were even in the Fourth of July parade riding on a combine and being in that parade is a pretty big deal in Seward."

With tongue in cheek, Meyer jokes about the parade appearance, but he is seriously optimistic that this Concordia team will be a good one.

"Our goal, and it is one we expect to reach, is to be in the upper half of our new conference," Meyer explained. "We've added two good football programs to a conference that was already very strong, so being in the first division of our league is a worthwhile goal because it means you are a good football team, probably a national playoff caliber team, if you do it. Now our conference won't get four teams in the playoffs, but I'd say any one of the top four is worthy of being there."

The NIAC, Concordia's conference since 1969, is expanding this fall with two new football schools coming in. The University of Sioux Falls, the 1996 NAIA national champion, and Dakota Wesleyan University are migrating to the conference from the South Dakota-Iowa Athletic Conference along with non-football schools Mount Marty College and Dordt College. The league is changing its name to the Great Plains Athletic Conference, or GPAC, and now includes 11 schools in three states.

Concordia's turnaround season came despite the loss of four starters to season-ending injuries in the Bulldogs' first two games, both wins. CU dropped three straight after that, but regrouped to go 3-1 down the stretch.

> ***"Our goal, and it is one we expect to reach, is to be in the upper half of our new conference"***
>
> **Coach Meyer**

One of the key players injured last season was defensive back Troy Schlueter, who broke his wrist in a 29-22 season-opening upset of 15th-ranked Huron University. That was the end of Schlueter's sophomore season and the junior-to-be from York has been eager to get back on the field. He plans to use his season on the sideline to be a better football player.

"The good thing, if there is one, is that you get to watch and see the whole field and really learn a lot about the game," Schlueter said. "I also watched a lot of video and really started to understand tendencies and how the coaches use them to call plays. It was also kind of fun getting to see my teammates play because you don't really when you are playing.

"For me, I just want to get back to where I was and go from there," he said. "You never know if you're going to be kind of shy about hitting someone with the injury on the back of your mind. The goals for this team should be really high. We've got so many starters back (16 in all) and the injured guys are back so I think seven or eight wins and a playoff berth is what we should be shooting for."

Another in-state junior, tight end Ross Wurdeman from Columbus, will play a key role for the Concordia offense. Wurdeman caught 29 passes a year ago, second on the team, for 369 yards and five touchdowns. He developed into one of the top targets for quarterback Jarrod Pimentel and should be again this season. Wurdeman thinks this is a key year for Concordia football.

"Getting the winning season was the first step in turning the corner, but it doesn't mean as much if you don't keep it going," Wurdeman said. "Staying competitive is the key and playing well against everybody, no matter who the opposition is. We're getting used to knowing we can win instead of thinking and hoping we can. We were two wins away from making the playoffs last year probably and so winning games we should and winning close games is definitely a goal for this year."

The Bulldogs dropped two games last season by a touchdown and also faltered in the season finale against a sub-.500 team. Coach Meyer likes his team's chances to reverse fortunes in the close games and he is trying to keep everyone's attention on what comes after the Wheat Bowl.

"The Wheat Bowl is a great thing for our team and our school and I wouldn't trade it, but at the same time we're mostly concerned about what happens the rest of the season," Meyer said. "Lindenwood presents a great challenge and a great opportunity but it is not a game that makes or breaks our season.

"It is the conference schedule that is most important to us."nsa

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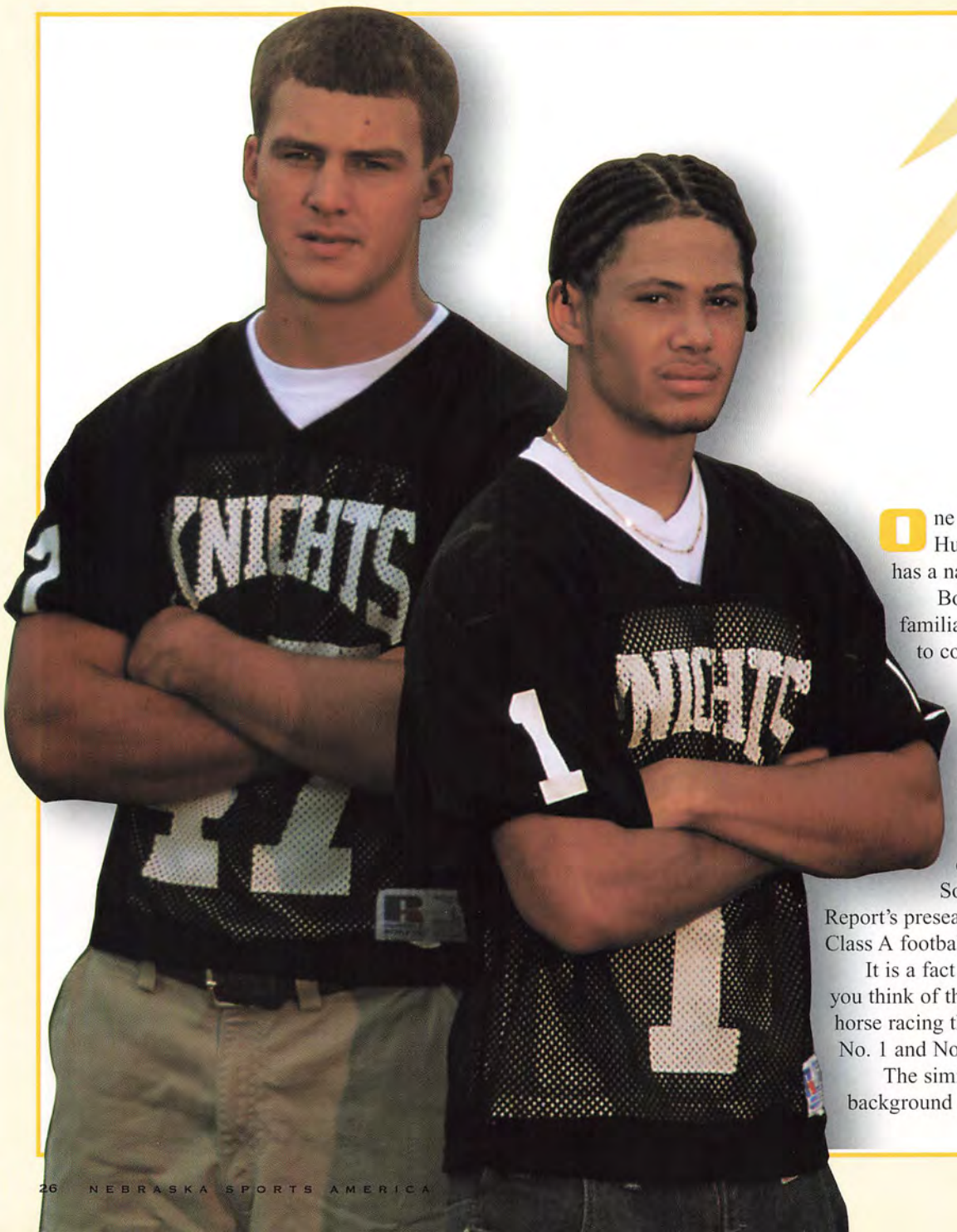


One has a name familiar to Husker football fans. One has a name that soon could be.

Both have names frightfully familiar to opponents who try to contain them.

Barrett Ruud, the son of former Husker all-Big 8 Conference linebacker Tom Ruud, and Tony Irions, his equally talented side-kick, are two key parts of the puzzle for Lincoln Southeast, Huskerland Prep Report's preseason No. 1-ranked team in Class A football.

It is a fact when you think of one, you think of the other. In the world of horse racing they'd be a field entry - No. 1 and No. 1A.

The similarity in their football background extends to the recruiting

Barrett Ruud & Jeremy Irions are a classic 1-2 punch

by Bob Jensen, Huskerland Prep Report

process. In June Ruud was offered, and verbally accepted, a scholarship offer to play for Nebraska. Irions was offered by the Huskers a couple of weeks later, but was recruited as a wingback and defensive back. As appealing as the offer was, Irions wants to play running back, so he will take his talents to New Mexico State to play for Tony Samuel.

The two players both have marvelous football skills, though their games are as different as day and night. Ruud is an enourmous high school running back, standing nearly 6-foot-3 and weighing a burly 220 pounds. Irions stands 5-foot-11, 180 pounds and oozes slippery.

Both play running back and linebacker. Ruud was recruited to Nebraska as a linebacker - the program's only inside linebacker recruit - and will follow in his father's rather sizeable footsteps. While Irions plays a sound linebacker, he's more of a natural running back, filled with moves which make you miss.

Southeast head coach Chuck Mizerski, who has coached the Knights to four state titles and three runner-up finishes since 1988, knows his boys have the goods.

"There is no doubt both Barrett and Tony are very talented individuals," says Mizerski, who enters his 22nd year as Knights' head coach. "Their strengths complement each other. I know many people talk about them as running backs, but I know our team will be awfully good on defense this year because Barrett and Tony will play great linebacker for us." Mizerski is right on a couple of items there. Yes, their skills do blend well, but it isn't likebacker where Ruud and Irions have opponent's most complete attention.

Just ask Mark King, coach of the crosstown rival Lincoln Northeast Rockets.

"They make a great combination at running back. They both do different things so well that if you don't prepare for both of them properly you will get burned.

"You have one guy (Ruud) who really wants to get his shoulders turned up field and run north and south - that's where he's most effective. You have the other who would really rather juke you, get to the sideline and turn it up field. They can kill you either way."

King does say facing such a dynamic duo can make you a better defense. "When you face two such diverse running styles, it makes you play an honest defense where you don't cheat.

"But the down side to that is when they alternate those backs like they do Southeast always has fresh legs in the game and that can catch up with you late in the game. You see them in quite few game which might be close early, but they explode in the fourth quarter because they are not so worn down."

Ruud, of course, has been immersed in Big Red football since he was born. He says his father's best friends are former teammates from his days at NU. Even so, he didn't automatically assume he'd be a Husker. "My dad had a great career at Nebraska and there is plenty of talk about Husker football in our house. But I while I like Nebraska I liked other programs, too, and considered other options.

"And while my dad still has all kinds of connections with Nebraska and a lot of other people figured I'd go there just because, he never put any pressure on me. He let me decide for myself."

One of the defining factors in Ruud's decision to accept NU's offer was that he was assured he'd be the only Husker inside linebacker in the 2001 recruiting class. He currently plays outside linebacker at Southeast, but expects the position switch to be no problem. The desire to be a featured running back has to date kept Irions from accepting the Nebraska scholarship offer. The primary reason the Huskers have balked at offering Irions at that position is his relative lack of size.

"Coach Solich told me if I could get up to 200 pounds they would offer me as a running back, which is the only position I really want to play in college," says Irions. He admits 20 pounds is a lot to gain, but feels he is capable of doing so without any loss of his electronically-timed 4.64 time in the 40-yard dash.

September 1 is opening night for most Nebraska high school football programs, including Southeast. The Knights will open play at unranked Fremont that night, but should get stern tests in the middle of the season when they play

No. 6 Papillion-LaVista and No. 7 Lincoln Northeast on back-to-back Fridays.

The Knights enter the season needing to repair its offensive line, having suffered the loss of four starters from last year's 10-1 team. No more all-staters Austin Williams or Ryan Schmuecker, but no serious problems either, according to Ruud.

"We need to get the line going, but we have some players who know it's their chance and we think they will play well," Ruud says in his husky, deep-pitched voice. "Besides, (line) coach (Mike) Butler will bring out the best in them."

Sitting at the top of the Class A heap, the Knights are likely to battle it out with No. 2 Millard West, the Class A runner-up in each of the past two playoffs, and No. 3 Millard North, which returns starters at 17 positions from an 8-2 team. Such championship expectations aren't unusual at Southeast, though in the minds of many the Knights overachieved a bit last year.

"I know I thought we'd lose a game or two before the playoffs," admits Ruud. "But beating Papillion early in the season was really big for us. They have a great program and that win gave us the shot of confidence we needed for the rest of the season."

A burden connected with high-profile success, Ruud knows he and Irions will come into the season, "with big bulls-eyes on our chests." He says the two will simply need to elevate their game and answer the challenge of every opposing defender trying to make their reputation by flattening these Division I recruits from Southeast.

Ruud and Irions will again alternate series on offense and both players already know who gets the start on Opening Night. "I get to start against Fremont, but Tony gets to start in our home opener," relates Ruud. Mizerski says that bookkeeping matter is never a problem for his staff.

"I never need to ask whose turn it is to start a game or a second-half-the boys are always real helpful in telling me whose going in," Mizerski tells you with a wry smile.

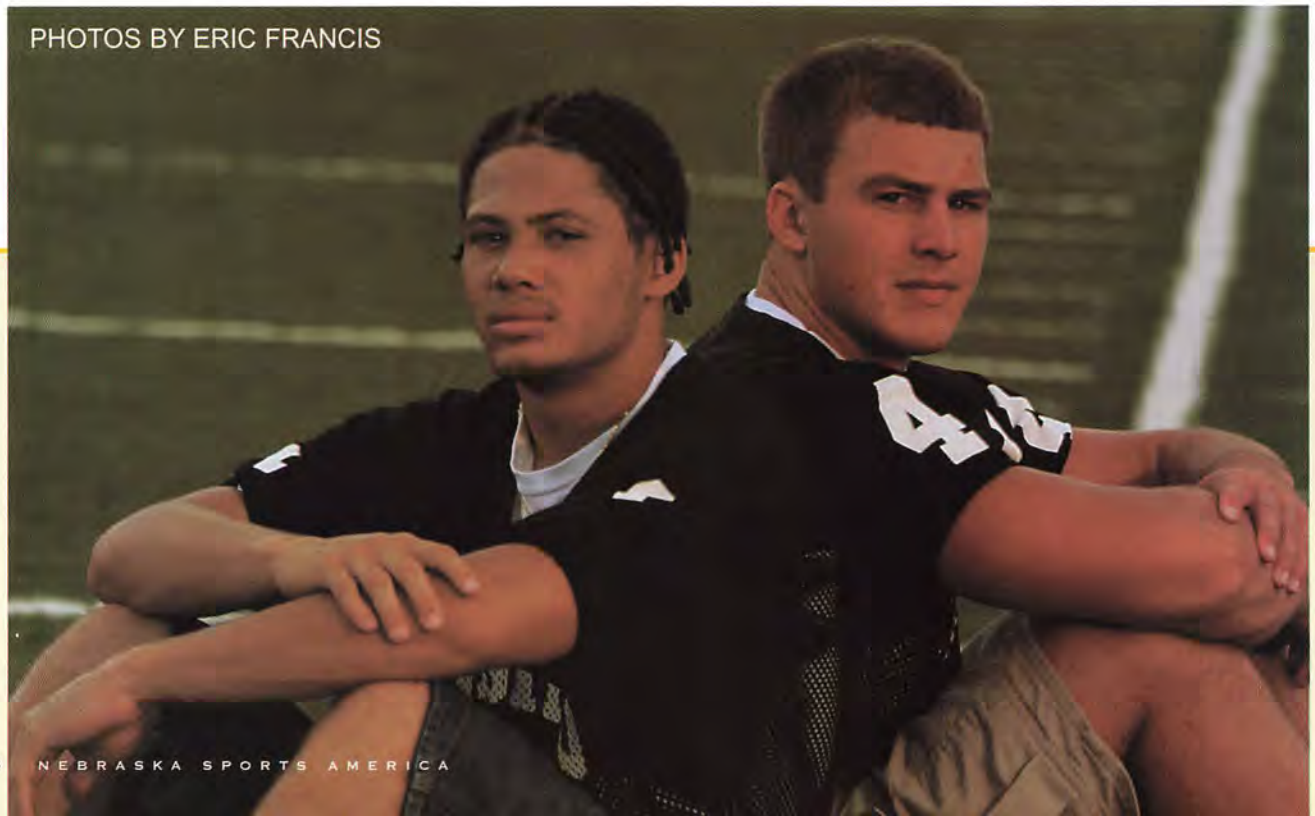
Which player starts the game should be immaterial, says King from his cross-field perch.

"What they have are two backs, with two different styles. Ruud reminds me of Judd Davies, big and strong, even more powerful than he looks on paper," says King, referring to the former Millard North star who is now a scholarship fullback at Nebraska. "Irions is more like the Omaha Central I-backs – great speed and elusive, more of a Calvin Jones-type.

"So you line up Judd Davies and Calvin Jones your backfield and you'll be all right. Chuck has got to feel pretty fortunate to have to have a couple of players like that."

And King and the rest of the Class A coaches have got to feel pretty unfortunate in having to stop them. nsa

PHOTOS BY ERIC FRANCIS



It's 'Knight Time' in Class A title race

It seems like old times at the top of the Huskerland Prep Report Class A preseason rankings.

Sitting at No. 1 is Lincoln Southeast, a program which produced four state title teams and two runners-up during the '90s.

Right in their hip pocket are a couple of Metro teams, No. 2 Millard West and No. 3 Millard North. Follow them up with No. 4 Creighton Prep and No. 5 Omaha Central and you have the pool of teams from which your 2000 state champion will emerge.

Mike McLaughlin, Millard West

Rounding out the top ten are Papillion-LaVista, Lincoln Northeast, Omaha Bryan, Millard South and North Platte. Southeast is blessed with the best set of running backs in the state in seniors Barrett Ruud (6-3, 220) and Tony Irions (5-10, 180). Ruud is a dominating presence, having bulled his way for 975 yards and 19 TDs last year, the latter figure second in Class A. Ruud, ranked as the No. 1 Class A senior football player in Nebraska for the 2000 seasons, is also a great linebacker, having accepted a scholarship offer from Nebraska.

Irions is a speed merchant (4.64 40) who last year rushed for 1,087 yards and 13 TDs, averaging an eye-popping 9.0 yards per carry in the process. Irions has been offered a scholarship by Nebraska.

Millard West, which has reached the state finals in each of the past two seasons, has some great weapons of its own. Foremost is senior 6-5 QB Sean McLaughlin, who has thrown for 3,331 yards and 41 TDs in his career. He's surrounded by all-state split end Daniel Bruce and senior running back Brian McIntyre, who rushed for 800 yards, caught passes for another 400 and accounted for 13 TDs last year.

Nebraska QB recruit Mike McLaughlin leads Millard North's charge toward the school's first-ever football title. The 180-pound senior, who is likened to former Mustang star Eric Crouch, rushed for 1,495 yards and 16 TDs last fall. Colt Palmer, an outstanding fullback and linebacker, and DB Milan Gross-Rhode are other team stalwarts.

Creighton Prep's Titus Adams, a 6-4, 280-pound senior defensive tackle, might be the most athletically gifted lineman in the state. He possesses great speed and is a savage hitter. The Junior Jays also feature a couple of great quarterbacks in seniors David Slaughter and Dan Burns. Omaha Central will feature a new star running back in 175-pound junior David Horne, who transferred from defending Class A champion Creighton Prep. He will run behind a line which features Noah Johnson, an HPR preseason all-state guard, and Mike Patlan, a 230-pound senior with Division I potential, according to Eagle coach Joe McMenamin. Also, keep an eye on junior running back Stevie Hicks, a 195-pound running back who also transferred from Creighton Prep.

Papillion-LaVista has a couple of great linemen in seniors Eric Hotz and Ryan Foral. Papio coach Gene Suhr calls the 6-foot-3, 270-pound Hotz "the best lineman in Nebraska." Foral checks in at 6-4, 270 and is an excellent drive blocker.

Lincoln Northeast will have some great younger players – sophomores Ben Warren and Chauncey Marshall will be household names sooner than later – but the team's featured attraction is senior running back Nanfwang Muftwang. A 5-9, 190-pound senior, Muftwang is only 1,300 yards away from breaking the state Class A career rushing record held by former Omaha Central and NU star Calvin Jones.

Omaha Bryan surprised the Class A field with eight wins last year. The Bears return 10 starters, including all-state tackle Nathan Carruthers and splendid tight end Ron Harris.

Millard South made a nice playoff run last year, falling a game short of the finals, and rests its hopes for similar success on lineman Clyde Soapmann (6-4, 250) and running back Joe Guido.

North Platte needs to replace all-Huskerland running back Jack O'Holleran, but fills in with senior running back Tony Jiminez and 6-5, 205-pound senior quarterback Kyle Rupp. Also look for the Bulldogs' incoming junior class to make an immediate impact. nsa

Dragons primed for breakthrough season

In a class recently dominated by Elkhorn and Lincoln Pius X, we see Gretna emerging as your 2000 Class B champions.

We like Gretna as the Huskerland Prep Report preseason No. 1-ranked team, followed by Seward, Elkhorn, Alliance and Scottsbluff. Auburn checks in at No. 6, Beatrice is No. 7 and Pius X No. 8, followed by Aurora and Hastings.

Gretna is coming off a brilliant 8-2 season, but only seemed to scratch the surface last fall. They are led by mammoth, HPR all-state tackle Brandon Avery (6-5, 260) and a couple of sensational skill players in quarterback Marcus Goldenstein and his favorite receiver, Sam Calabretto.

Goldenstein threw for 1,427 yards and 12 touchdowns last year, while Calabretto, the premier deep pass receiver in Class B, caught 33 passes for an average gain of 23.5 yards per reception, including nine touchdowns. Look for them to make more beautiful music together this season.

Seward has some great juniors and a tremendous senior linebacker in Sam Koch (6-1, 215), who runs a 4.55 40-yard dash. Rounding out the best linebacker corps in Class B are juniors Andy Kadavy and Jeff Keller. Junior I-back Jeff Luebbe rambled for 1,348 yards and 19 touchdowns last year.

Elkhorn is Elkhorn, so they are third despite having only one returning starter. Senior Ryan Wulfekuhl (6-1, 190) will start at guard and linebacker, but watch for senior fullback Josh Simms, a 200-pounder who should blossom into a star this fall.

A superb cast of skill players propels Alliance to the No. 4 slot. Senior quarterback Tony Essay does a nifty job of running the option and also passed for 766 yards and 14 touchdowns last fall. His best receiver, and quite likely the best player on the team, is wide receiver Spencer Brown. The 6-3 senior averaged 23 yards per catch last year, including seven scores. Senior running back Travis Covey should approach a thousand yards on the ground.

Scottsbluff, last year's western finalist, will push Alliance for the District 6 crown. The Bearcats return outstanding seniors John Franklin (5-10, 228) and Vince Martinez (5-10, 191). Franklin will be an all-state lin9ebacker, while Martinez is a three-year starter at nose guard who will now step into the starting tailback position, where he should star.

If you are looking for a title darkhorse in Class B, check out Auburn. The Bulldogs boast the top player in the class, 190-pound senior running back Eric Moody, who rushed for 1,905 yards and 21 touchdowns last season.

Beatrice returns the bulk of its talent from last year's 5-4 team, including running back Isaiah Dell and tackle Shawn Morgan, a couple of preseason all-state candidates.

After an injury-riddled 3-5 season in '99, Lincoln Pius X should bounce back this fall. Look for linebacker Zach Allen and defensive tackle Aaron Seidl, a couple of seniors, to lead the way.

Aurora returns only two starters from last year's team, including all-state kicker Tom George, but has great tradition and we like them ninth.

Last year No. 10 Hastings fell short of expectations, but expect the Tigers to win their district this fall. They are led by senior running back Travis Stoetzel and 6-foot-2, 190-pound linebacker Brian Trader. nsa

HPR Class B

TOP 10

1. Gretna
2. Seward
3. Elkhorn
4. Alliance
5. Scottsbluff
6. Auburn
7. Beatrice
8. Lincoln Pius X
9. Aurora
10. Hastings

High School football previews, rankings and photos provided by Bob Jensen, Huskerland Prep Report.

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Class C Preview

Two-time defending champion Norfolk Catholic is Huskerland's pick to rule C1 again, while Republican Valley has that championship look in C2.

Lucas Anderson, Sutherland

Norfolk Catholic has been the dominant C1 football program of the past decade and the return of linebacker John Lammli and tackle Zach Zoubek, among others, leads me to believe the Knights will repeat.

Hastings St. Cecilia, led by twins Austin and Conrad Parks, is second by a nose. Austin is perhaps the most exciting player in C1, while Conrad is a four-year starter at linebacker and already owns the school tackle record.

Columbus Scotus, Pierce and Raymond Central round out the C1 top five. Scotus has a superb running back in Jeff Kosch, Pierce has maybe the best athlete in C1 in junior end Matt Herian, and Raymond Central features seniors Kyle Anderson and Bryan Caha.

No. 6 Wilber-Clatonia returns all-state quarterback Josh Lamberson, Chase County has the best back in the class in senior Eric Fuehrer and Aquinas will lean on senior back Dusty Kerkman. Central City returns a large, talented senior class led by tackle Joe Dexter, while Chadron has another great quarterback in C.J. Bach.

In Class C2, Republican Valley returns a brilliant senior class, led by running back Nathan Liess, linebackers Dan Haag and Rob McConville and defensive end August Barber.

No. 2 East Butler has a Division I talent in tight end Kyle Struebing, No. 3 Laurel-Concord returns 11 starters from last year's 7-3 team, including Finnish exchange student Seppo Evwaraye, who has verbally accepted a scholarship to play at Nebraska.

Cambridge, a five-time state champion in the '90s, is led by senior tackle Jay Sayer and senior back Brady Koch. No. 5 Bloomfield features all-staters Tim Baack and Casey Schmeckpeper, while youthful Elmwood-Murdock has an excellent junior class, led by QB Andy Rorie.

No. 7 Randolph, the C2 runners-up in '99, is led by all-state back Dusty Backer. Hartington Cedar Catholic will be third in it's district behind Laurel-Concord and Randolph, but No. 8 in our rankings. The Trojans are led by Neil Wortmann and Jeff Jones. Grant has a great quarterbck in Eric Gengenbach and Sutherland has the best player in C2, senior running back Lucas Anderson. nsa

HPR Class C1

TOP 10

1. Norfolk Catholic
2. Hastings St. Cecilia
3. Columbus Scotus
4. Pierce
5. Raymond Central
6. Wilber-Clatonia
7. Chase County
8. Aquinas
9. Central City
10. Chadron

HPR Class C2

TOP 10

1. Republican Valley
2. East Butler
3. Laurel-Concord
4. Cambridge
5. Bloomfield
6. Elmwood-Murdock
7. Randolph
8. Hartington Cedar Cath.
9. Grant
10. Sutherland

Sterling, Dodge rule eight-man

Two more traditional eight-man football power houses, D1 Sterling and D2 Dodge, will win their respective classes.

Sterling returns six starters on either side of the ball, including senior QB Jake Weyers and junior running back Chris Bartels, who rushed for 17 TDs last year. They are ranked one step ahead of '99 runner-up Lawrence-Nelson, which will be led by senior running back Adam Eickman. Cedar Bluffs, and marvelous junior running back Ben Hansen, pulls in third, while Humphrey St. Francis, led by senior linebacker Brandon Pfeifer, is fourth and Falls City Sacred Heart, with all-state guard Brandon Bonk, is fifth.

No. 6 Howells features all-state defensive back Mitch Blum, while Culbertson sports record-setting running back Brandon Hagan, who rushed for over 2,900 yards last year. Overton came on strong at the end of last year and has two excellent players in Clayton Jefferies and Luke Meier.

High Plains is a merged school consisting of the former Polk-Hordville and Clarks schools, and will have a super running back in Tyson Glasser. No.10 Medicine Valley, a D1 semifinalist last year, is led by seniors Daniel Jergensen and Ryan Myers.

In D2, defending champion Dodge and last year's runner-up Butte start 1-2. Dodge has a couple of all-staters in Ryan Franzluebbers and Zach Parr, while Butte counters with all-state lineman Cody Claussen and QB Kyle Lechtenberg.

Greeley, led by running back Mat Korth, is third, followed by Lindsay Holy Family, which has a marvelous defensive end in Tony Kurtenbach. Leyton returns seven starters, including Mark Gaertner, while Nebraska City Lourdes will field an explosive offense led by QB Mike Morris and running back Zeb Durr.

No. 7 Pope John has a great playmaker in junior quarterback Brian Selting, while Petersburg has a budding star in junior back Cole Henn. Watch for quarterback Aaron Broz to again be sensational for No. 9 Hayes Center, while Sargent returns seven starters, including all-state defensive tackle Mike Smith. nsa

Clint French, Bancroft-Rosalie

HPR Class D1

TOP 10

1. Sterling
2. Lawrence/Nelson
3. Cedar Bluffs
4. Falls City Sacred Heart
5. Humphrey St. Francis
6. Howells
7. Culbertson
8. Overton
9. High Plains
10. Medicine Valley

HPR Class D2

TOP 10

1. Dodge
2. Butte
3. Greeley
4. Lindsay Holy Family
5. Leyton
6. Nebraska City Lourdes
7. Pope John
8. Petersburg
9. Hayes Center
10. Sargent

GOLF USA PRESENTS

Nebraska Golfer

Local Flavor

by Kevin Warneke

Photos by Eric Francis

BUY.COM Omaha Classic in the spotlight

Although Gutschewski left Omaha's Champion Club without earning a dime, the former University of Nebraska golfer said his confidence received a boost from his near miss at making the tournament cut.

The BUY.COM Tour draws all types of golfers. Most aspire to play on the PGA Tour, while others are waiting to turn 55 and try their hand on the Senior Tour.

"That's the beauty of the Buy.Com

Lincoln's Mike Schuchart was impressive at Buy.com stops in Omaha and Dakota Dunes, SD.

Tour," said Omaha Tournament Director Mike West "Most guys on this tour can flat out play. Some are hanging on and others might just be dreaming.

"But dreams sometimes come true."

Gutschewski was one of a handful of Nebraskans who earned the right to play in the annual Omaha tournament. Omahan Ryan Vermeer, who turned pro after a collegiate career at Kansas, and Nebraska pros Mark Wright and Skip Tredway also failed to make the cut.

Mike Schuchart, a Lincoln resident who played on the PGA Tour in 1990 and '93, had better luck. Schuchart, who finished second the previous week at the Dakota Dunes Open, finished tied for 38th and earned $2,500. It was his second-straight payday after failing to earn a dime on tour since 1997.

"I actually got kind of excited about last week (at Dakota Dunes) when I got there and there were people around, and I got in the hunt. Some of the pieces starting flowing again, and I said 'This is kind of fun.'

"I remembered what this is all about."

Schuchart started strong in Omaha, shooting an opening-day 64, two shots from the lead. Rounds of 74 and 70 on Friday and Saturday, put Schuchart above the cut but far below the leaders.

Schuchart started strong again on Sunday, blazing to 12 under by hole 16. "It felt great out there," he said, "until the last two holes." Consecutive double bogies dropped him to a tie for 38th and cost him at least $5,000 in prize money.

Gutschewski, a Ralston High grad, used the 2000 Omaha Classic as a litmus test to gauge his chances at the coming qualifying school for the 2001 PGA and Buy.Com tours. "I'm not quite there, yet. You get a taste of it, and you realize you're not that far away."

He opened with a 74. "I didn't hit the ball to badly, but had a little trouble around the greens."

His next day was better. But too many pars – on a course that breeds low scores – did him in. A birdie on his 15th hole put Gutschewski at 1 under and within striking distance of making the cut.

Heading into 18, Gutschewski knew he needed an eagle on the final hole to reach 3 under, the magic number for earning a chance to play another day at The Champions Club.

"I had to go for it," he said. "I knew the cut was 3 under. The odds of me getting it around the green and making a putt were a lot better than laying up and holing out from somewhere."

Unfortunately for Gutschewski, his drive had enough distance, but was off target. Way off target.

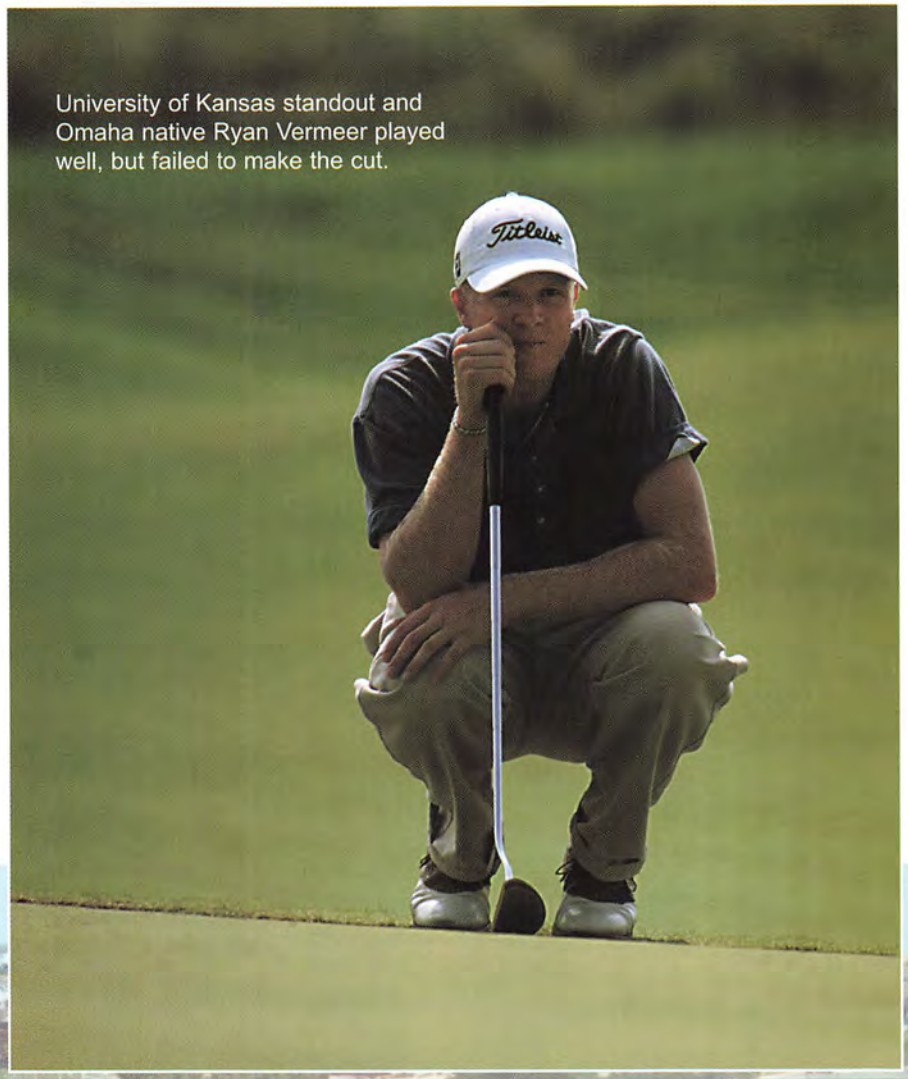
Gutschewski's drive flirted with Eagle Run Drive, but landed between the dirt and cart paths in thick wild flowers. His chip found the green, but skirted past, along with his chance for a tee time on Saturday.

Despite failing to make the cut, Gutschewski still could find reasons to

That's the beauty of the Buy.Com Tour, most guys on this tour can flat out play. Some are hanging on and others might just be dreaming. But dreams sometimes come true.

Omaha Tournament Director, Mike West

Scott Gutschewski fires a seven-iron at the green in the Omaha Classic.


University of Kansas standout and Omaha native Ryan Vermeer played well, but failed to make the cut.

smile. One was the applause that greeted him after signing his scorecard and being interviewed by a member of the media.

Since finishing his career at Nebraska in 1999, Gutschewski bounced between playing in state opens, playing on the Prairie Golf Tour (he finished fourth this year) and trying to qualify to play in Buy.Com tournaments.

Until Monday qualifying for the Omaha Classic, Gutschewski had been unsuccessful three times. He needed five extra holes to grab the final of seven spots up for grabs during qualifying at Indian Creek golf course.

"I played pretty well," he said. "I can't complain. Indian Creek is a pretty good golf course.

"I left a few shots out there, but everyone does."

Gutschewski said he's given himself no timeline for making his name in professional golf. "I figure as long as I can keep playing, I'm going to keep playing. ... I can't imagine anything else I'd rather do."

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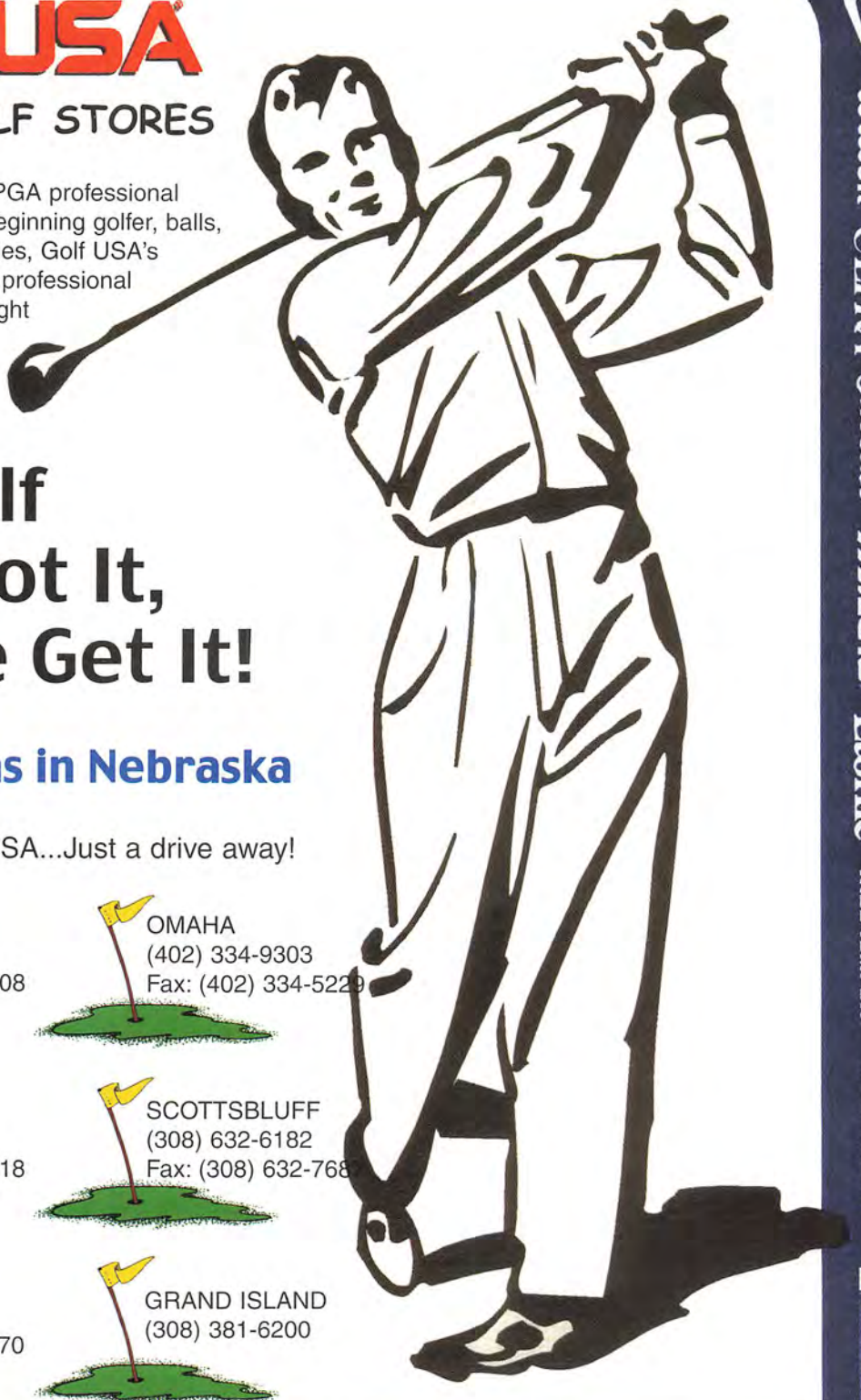

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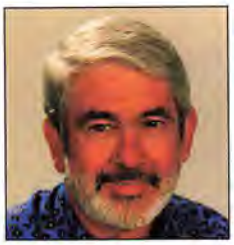

In the stands

WITH TERRY L. HENION

Let History Repeat itself

This started out to be a comparison of the 2000 Husker football team to the 1969 Nebraska team that finished 9-2, destroyed favored Georgia 45-6 in the Sun Bowl and kick-started the Cornhusker to consecutive national championships in 1970 and 1971.

But, upon further review...

The 1999 Huskers were in the thick of the national championship race for most of the season, despite a devastating loss to Texas at midseason, a defeat that was avenged in the Big 12 title game. Nebraska finished as the country's second-ranked team, behind unbeaten national champ Florida State.

The 1969 Huskers were coming off the second of two consecutive 6-4 seasons under Coach Bob Devaney, and the grumbling among many Husker fans had become louder and louder. A season-opening loss to Southern Cal only added to the volume. And when Nebraska lost 17-7 to Missouri in the Big Eight opener to fall to 2-2, Devaney's critics grew in number.

But then something odd happened. Devaney's talented underclassmen decided to grow up early. Names that would become stellar in the Husker pantheon began to glitter. Names like Glover and Rodgers, Jacobsen and Harper, and Tagge and Kinney began to make headlines. The Huskers reeled off six-straight wins, including a 44-14 romp over rival Oklahoma. That earned Nebraska a berth in the 1969 Sun Bowl against Georgia, coached by Vince Dooley, and most observers (and oddsmakers, for that matter), thought the Husker win streak would likely end there.

The Bulldogs, under Dooley, had a powerful defensive club and Georgia was favored to defeat Nebraska. But when the final whistle sounded in the 1969 Sun Bowl, it was clear to everyone that Nebraska was a budding football giant. The Huskers dominated Georgia from start to finish in a 45-6 victory that wasn't nearly as close as the final score indicated.

Dooley, nearly at a loss for words in the post-game interview session, said that he was shocked at how Devaney's team had steamrolled his beloved 'Dawgs.

"There is some good news, though," Dooley said, chuckling. "We don't have to play Nebraska next season. I pity those who have to."

Nebraska's impressive win in the Sun Bowl catapulted the Huskers to No. 11 in the final Associated Press rankings and back into the national picture.

And the rest, as they say, was history as Devaney's team reeled off back-to-back national titles and drew acclaim in 1971 as "the greatest college football team of all time."

And now comes the 2000 edition of the Huskers, led by Frank Solich, and again the collegiate football world is expecting great things from Nebraska. Several preseason publications pick the Huskers to win the national championship.

Why? Well, for one thing, there are those talented Husker underclassmen who came of age early. Names such as Crouch and Raiola, Vanden Bosch and Polk, and Craver and Volk. And then there is that "bowl" thing, hauntingly similar to the 1969 team.

Nebraska went into the 2000 Orange Bowl game against Tennessee as the underdog.The Vols, under Coach Phil Fullmer, had been steamrolled by Nebraska two years earlier and this time Tennessee was ready, Vols fans said. Tennessee was bigger, stronger, tougher, faster and ready. Oddsmakers agreed, making Tennessee a 7-point favorite.

Wrong again.

Nebraska, led by its punishing offensive line play, crushed Tennessee again. And after the game, Fullmer put on his Vince Dooley face.

"Nebraska was much better than we were," Fullmer said. "We thought we had done what we needed to do to be able to play at their level, but it was obvious that we haven't gotten there. They are a great football team and I'm glad that we don't play them next year." nsa

Terry Henion is a long-time sportswriter who has worked for the Omaha World-Herald and Hastings Tribune.

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